

null
Diana T Fritz 02/06/2007 05:37:00 PM From DB/Inbox: Search Results

Cable
Text:

CONFIDENTIAL

SIPDIS
TELEGRAM

June 16, 2004

To: No Action Addressee
Action: Unknown
From: AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI (ABU DHABI 1987 - ROUTINE)
TAGS: PREL, MOPS
Captions: None
Subject: UAE DOWNPLAYS RECENT FISHING BOAT SEIZURES
Ref: None

C O N F I D E N T I A L ABU DHABI 01987

SIPDIS
CXABU:
ACTION: POL
INFO: RSO AMB DCM P/M ECON

DISSEMINATION: POL
CHARGE: PROG

APPROVED: AMB:MMWAHBA
DRAFTED: POL:JFMAYBURY
CLEARED: DCM:RAALBRIGHT DAO:BK

VZCZCADI308
RR RUEHC RUEHZM
DE RUEHAD #1987/01 1681126
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
R 161126Z JUN 04
FM AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 4749
INFO RUEHZM/GULF COOPERATION COUNCIL COLLECTIVE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ABU DHABI 001987

SIPDIS

STATE FOR NEA/ARP AND NEA/NGA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/15/2014
TAGS: [PREL](#) [MOPS](#) [IR](#) [TC](#)
SUBJECT: UAE downplays recent fishing boat seizures

Ref: Abu Dhabi 1881

Classified by Ambassador Marcelle M. Wahba, reasons
1.5 (b) and (d)

1. (C) Summary: Abu Dhabi Deputy Crown Prince and UAE Armed Forces Chief of Staff Shaykh Mohamed bin Zayed (MbZ) downplayed the significance of recent seizures of Iranian and UAE fishing boats by each of their coast guard forces. Seizures of fishing and smuggling boats by both sides are relatively common, he told the Ambassador during a visit to the Embassy to say farewell to her on June 15. MbZ also said that the UAE was implementing a comprehensive system to register and track all UAE registered vessels to make it easier for the coast guard to distinguish incoming foreign vessels from afar. End Summary.

¶2. (C) Shaykh Mohamed told the Ambassador June 15 that the recent seizures of Iranian and UAE fishing and smuggling boats by both sides are relatively common. He said that the six fishing boats from the UAE and their 23 crew members seized June 13 had all been apprehended in Iranian waters and said that the UAEG did not view Iranian actions as inappropriate. He said they were all owned by the same person, so the presence of the six boats in Iranian waters had resulted from one decision. According to the English language daily "Gulf News" on June 16, the UAE boats were fishing near the Iranian island of Qeshm. The newspaper also cited an Iranian state television report from June 15 that said Iran's navy had seized a UAE fishing vessel and its five crew near the Iranian island of Siri.

¶3. (C) MbZ noted that last year the UAE Coast Guard had killed 9 Iranians in maritime incidents involving vessels that were fired upon or rammed for refusing to stop. In 2002, 13 Iranians were killed. He said that these incidents have never escalated to the political level and have generally been dealt with quietly by consular officers handling the repatriation of bodies. Responding to the Ambassador's mention of media coverage of the recent seizures, MbZ said that what has changed is that the Iranian security chief on Abu Musa has blown the recent incidents out of proportion because one of the fishing crews apprehended in UAE waters was working for him. He said the issue is about money, not sovereignty, and that is why both sides have an interest in managing it quietly.

¶4. (C) MFA Under Secretary Abdullah Rashid Al-Noaimi also downplayed the incidents during the Ambassador's farewell call at his office on June 14. "I would not say there has been an increase (in such seizures), but it has always been high," he said. He added that the Iranians also fly surveillance aircraft "all the time" and these "approach our oil platforms." He did not see anything suspicious in the latest reports of boats being seized. The reason the UAE publicized the recent boat seizures is that the Iranians went public. He said the crews of the fishing vessels do not have GPS on board. "They don't know where they're going."

¶5. (C) We don't have further information on the number of Iranian and Emirati boats that have been detained in the past, or are currently being detained, by the two countries' naval forces. However, an Embassy contact has told us that Iran has been detaining two UAE Coast Guard crews after alleged violation of Iranian territorial waters two months ago. Furthermore, we have reported that the UAE Coast Guard had seized an Iranian fishing boat that had entered territorial waters on June 2 (see reftel).

Improved vessel registration system

¶6. (C) MbZ said that the UAE was implementing a comprehensive system to register and track all UAE registered vessels. The system, expected to be operational by July 2005, would provide every UAE vessel with a bar code that could be monitored from afar by the coast guard. All vessels, including dhows, are required to register by May 2005 or they will be prohibited from entering or departing UAE ports. MbZ noted that the Qataris were impressed with the system and wanted to implement something compatible. In this context, MbZ explained that he had separated the UAE Coast Guard from the Navy because their missions were different and the coast guard's critically important police and border control function was not getting the right attention under the Navy.

Comment:

¶7. (C) Seizures of fishing boats are normal at this time of year, according to senior UAEG officials. Each side is patrolling what it considers its economic exclusionary zone around the contested islands. We have no evidence that these actions are in any way politically motivated.

WAHBA